

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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C O N F I D E N T I A L KINGSTON 0475

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, SHUM,JM
SUBJECT: JLP REAFFIRMS ELECTORAL BOYCOTT

REF: 77 KINGSTON 7556

1. THE MINISTER FOR PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS, KEBLE MUNN, ANNOUNCED ON JANUARY 17 THAT ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD ON FEBRUARY 7 TO FILL THREE PARISH COUNCIL SEATS. IN RESPONSE, THE OPPOSITION JAMAICA LABOUR PARTY (JLP) ISSUED A STATEMENT THE FOLLOWING DAY IN WHICH IT REITERATED ITS REFUSAL TO CONTEST ELECTIONS UNTIL THE PRESENT ELECTORAL SYSTEM IS REFORMED BY THE CREATION OF AN INDEPENDENT ELECTION COMMISSION. COMMENTING ON THE MINISTER'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE ELECTIONS TO THE ST. ANN, CLAREDON AND KINGSTON-ST. ANDREW CORPORATION COUNCILS, JLP GENERAL SECRETARY BRUCE GOLDING NOT ONLY REAFFIRMED THE OPPOSITION PARTY'S REFUSAL TO CONTEST UNDER A "SYSTEM WHICH THE PNP (PEOPLE'S NATIONAL PARTY) CONTINUES TO MANIPULATE IN THE MOST BRAZEN AND SHAMELESS MANNER" BUT WENT ON TO SAY:

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"INDEED, IT IS SIGNIFICANT THAT OF THE THREE BY-ELECTIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN ANNOUNCED, TWO ARE BEING HELD AS A RESULT OF COURT ORDERS WHICH DECLARED THAT THE TWO PNP CANDIDATES ELECTED IN FEBRUARY 1977 WERE NOT QUALIFIED TO BE ELECTED BECAUSE THEY WERE ILLEGALLY REGISTERED AS VOTERS IN THE CONSTITUENCY.

" THIS JUDGMENT IS ITSELF A CONDEMNATION
OF THE PRESENT ELECTORAL SYSTEM WHICH ALLOWS
PNP SUPPORTERS TO BE REGISTERED NOT ONCE
AND WHERE THEY RESIDE, BUT WHEREVER THEY
WISH AND AS OFTEN AS THE DESIRE."

2. COMMENT: THE JLP STATEMENT WAS ISSUED ON THE SAME
DAY THAT PRIME MINISTER MANLEY AND OPPOSITION LEADER EDDIE
SEAGA MET TO DISCUSS ELECTORAL REFORM AND OTHER ISSUES. THERE
HAS BEEN NO PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT ON THE ELECTORAL REFORM ASPECT
OF THE TALKS SO FAR, AND A JLP SOURCE SAYS THAT
SINCE MORE MEETINGS WILL BE REQUIRED, IT WOULD BE PREMATURE
TO COMMENT PUBLICLY AT THIS EARLY DATE. IN THIS SETTING,
SAID THE SOURCE, THE ISSUANCE OF THE PUBLIC STATEMENT BY
GOLDING SERVES PRIMARILY TO
REMIND BOTH THE PUBLIC AND THE RULING PARTY OF THE
JLP'S COMMITMENT TO A BOYCOTT OF ELECTORAL ACTIVITY
PENDING ACCEPTABLE REFORM. THE JLP CLEARLY SEES
LITTLE LOSS IN STANDING ASIDE FROM THE PARISH COUNCIL
ELECTIONS; RATHER, THE OPPORTUNITY TO BOYCOTT THESE
FORTHCOMING ELECTIONS ALLOWS THE OPPOSITION PARTY TO
REMIND JAMAICANS-- AND ANYONE ABROAD WHO MAY BE
INTERESTED-- THAT IT CHALLENGES THE LEGITIMACY OF
ANY ELECTION HELD UNDER THE PRESENT SYSTEM.
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